
Introduction



There is a need for additional high quality child care services in Washington State. However, opening a child care or out of school program is not for those who seek a simple, easy way to make a living. The start up process and ongoing work is full of complexity and challenge, with periodic doses of irritation and stress. So, why would anyone press forward with such an undertaking?

Running a child care or school age program is some of the most important, rewarding work to be found. In a world where most people find their jobs high pressured, uninspiring, and without deeper meaning, working with children and their families offers an opportunity to make a real contribution to the world and discover new joy each day. More than a service industry, child care work gets right to the heart of human development and the learning process. It provides a concrete way to influence the next generation and to support families who need to leave their children in the care of others. If you approach your work with a well-thought out vision for children and families, you will likely create a sense of excitement and imagination for all involved in your program. You will begin to see yourself as a leader, making a vital contribution to your community and to the future that today's children will inherit.

This *Child Care Facility Planning Manual for Washington State* is intended to be a consolidated resource for the development of a quality center serving children from infancy through school age. It is intended to be used both by those interested in starting a child care program as well as the architects and contractors who are involved in the design and construction process. The manual offers a description of the steps to take in designing a facility, references to the published requirements, and design considerations for indoor and outdoor elements of your facility. Since programmatic issues have strong implications for facility design, this manual also offers a general overview of program considerations.

The planning process and implementation for both the facility and program is complex. Professional assistance can be used in all phases of the development - from the formation of a vision, an organizational structure and a business plan, through the design, construction and operation of the child care center.

This manual is intended as a starting place and an overview of the considerations and regulations you must address in your planning and design work. There are many other valuable resources to consult – publications and professional organizations –some of which have been listed in the Resource section of the Appendix.